

What is Brahmacharya (Celibacy)?

Brahmacharya is purity in thought, word and deed. In a special sense it is celibacy or control of the sex desire in thought, word and deed.

Brahmacharya includes character building, or the right moulding of character. It is a must in spiritual life. It is said that knowledge is power, but real power lies in character. As a power, character is superior to knowledge.

Brahmacharya is the very foundation of Yoga. Just as a house that is built on a weak foundation will surely collapse, so also you will fail in meditation if you are weak in Brahmacharya.

Without Brahmacharya it is not possible to possess good concentration of mind, a good memory, and a strong will - the main essentials for God-realization.

Brahmacharya is the most vital subject for those who wish to attain success in material and spiritual life. Without it a boy or a girl cannot be successful, either in studies, in sports, in worldly activities, or in spiritual practices.

The well known Rishi Yajnavalkya says: "**Brahmacharya is abstaining from sexual pleasure forever, under all conditions and in all places, either physically, mentally or verbally.**"

Physical Brahmacharya is control of the physical organs, while mental Brahmacharya is control of lustful thoughts.

Mental control is indeed much more difficult than physical control, but through sincere exertion one can get established in mental Brahmacharya perfectly. Always maintain the ideal, then the final goal can be realized soon. There is no doubt about this.

Brahmacharya is absolutely necessary for the attainment of peace and God - vision. It is a fresh spring flower who's each petal gives off fragrance of freedom. **It is a powerful weapon for waging war against the internal demons of lust, anger, greed and jealousy.**

Brahmacharya is divested of all connection with the five vital breaths, mind, understanding, the five senses of perception; and the five senses of action. It is on that account free from all the perceptions that the senses give.

Brahmacharya is exceedingly difficult to practice. That wise man who has betaken himself to the practice of this vow should, with an extended and enlightened mind, burn the sins in his mind which are due to the quality of Passion.

Veerya (Semen) – the Vital Fluid

God is Rasa. Rasa is Veerya, the vital fluid or semen. You can attain eternal bliss and peace by preserving the Veerya. **Brahmacharya means control of the Veerya. The vital force or Veerya is preserved only by one who is established in the practice of Brahmacharya.**

- The vital fluid or semen is lost and wasted during sexual indulgence.

From food comes juice or chyle; from chyle comes blood and flesh; from flesh comes fat; from fat comes bones; from bones come marrow. Lastly, from marrow comes semen.

- The Veerya comes out of the very marrow concealed in the bones. **It is found in a subtle state in all the cells of the body. Mark here how precious the semen is!**
- **It is the last essence of food. It is the essence of essences.**

As the vital force is the most precious substance in the physical body, it should be carefully preserved. Its wastage means loss of physical and mental energy.

- It is said that a drop of semen comes out of forty drops of blood.
- According to Ayurveda it comes from eighty drops of blood.

Just as sugar pervades the entire sugarcane and butter pervades milk, so also semen pervades the whole body.

- Just as buttermilk is thinned after the butter has been extracted, so also the semen is thinned by its wastage.
- The more is the wastage of the semen, the more is the physical and mental weakness.

Ojas Shakti - Sex-sublimation

When semen is preserved, it gets reabsorbed by the body and stored in the brain as Ojas Shakti or spiritual power.

- The seminal energy is changed into spiritual energy. This is called the process of sex-sublimation.
- The Ojas Shakti is used for spiritual Sadhana by the Yogi.

The vital force is closely linked with the nervous system. Hence, it is vitally necessary to preserve it carefully if one desires to have strong nerves. In Yoga Shastra it is stated: "The falling of semen brings death; the preservation of it gives life." The

semen is the real vitality in man. It is the hidden treasure in him. It gives a glow to the face, strength to the intellect and well being to the entire system.

Girls, too, suffer great loss through having unchaste thoughts and giving way to lust. Vital nervous energy is lost. There is a corresponding loss of Veerya in them as well.

The Srutis state that a man's full life span is a hundred years. This can be achieved only if a person is established in perfect Brahmacharya.

- It is through the attainment of good conduct only that one can live to a ripe old age and be ever happy and peaceful.
- Even if all other qualities may be lacking, good conduct alone will ensure longevity.

You must have pure character; otherwise you will lose your vital energy or Veerya. An early death will be the result.

Another important point to remember is that the secret of long life lies in the choice of pure food and drink, chastity, temperance, sobriety and a cheerful and optimistic outlook on life.

- So, gluttons, drunkards and those given to idleness and laziness cannot hope to have long life.

According to psychological and natural laws, the length of human life, or any life, should be at least five times the period necessary to reach full growth.

- The horse grows for a period of about three years and lives to be about twelve or fourteen.
- The camel grows for eight years and lives to be forty.
- Man grows for about twenty to twenty-five years. If all accidents are counted out, his normal duration of life should be not less than one hundred years.

This also tallies very well with the advice of the Hindu Holy Scriptures that Brahmacharya should be practiced for the first twenty-five years.

- **During the period of growth there is not to be any loss of the vital fluid.**

There are some rare cases where people have attained longevity and high intellectual powers despite their loose, immoral ways. This is obviously due to their past Karma. But they would have been still more powerful and brilliant through the practice of Brahmacharya.

The Ideal Brahmachari (Celibate)

The word 'Brahmachari' is used in two senses. Firstly, there is the student Brahmachari, who marries and becomes a householder after completing his study. He is in the first of the four stages of life described in Hindu law books. The second type of Brahmachari is the lifelong celibate and is called an Akhanda (unbroken) Brahmachari.

Brahmacharis (Celibates) of this latter type are very rare. Matted hair, application of ash and wearing a loincloth cannot make one a true Brahmachari.

- **The Akhanda Brahmachari is one who has not allowed a single drop of semen to be wasted for an unbroken period of twelve years.**
- **Such a person can have the vision of God without effort. He achieves the goal of life. He glows with effulgence.**

The seminal energy of an Akhanda Brahmachari has been converted into Ojas Shakti or spiritual energy through the process called sex-sublimation. Such a person can turn out a great deal of mental work. He is very intelligent. He has a magnetic aura on his face. His eyes shine brightly.

Peace of mind, fearlessness, a strong will, good memory and power of concentration, keen application to work - these are the fruits of Brahmacharya.

Brahmacharya in Active Life

The practice of Karma Yoga or selfless service will not be possible without Brahmacharya.

- **If the Veerya (semen) is lost, the *Prana* gets unsteady. If the *Prana* gets agitated, one becomes nervous. Then the mind also cannot work properly and the person becomes fickle-minded. This is mental weakness.**

Brahmacharya brings material and spiritual progress.

- **It is a powerful weapon for waging war against the demons of lust, anger, greed and jealousy.**
- **It gives great energy, a clear brain, strong will, retentive memory and good power of enquiry.**

Lack of Brahmacharya brings about loss of memory, a weak will, nervous disorders, tension, lack of the power of concentration, and physical diseases.

The ignorant man is an instrument in the hands of his thoughts and Karmas. Man, the master of his destiny, has lost his divine glory and becomes a slave, a tool in the hands of sex and ego.

- Sex and ego are the products of ignorance. Knowledge of God destroys these two enemies.

Some Western psychologists wrongly believe that if one does not indulge in sex, then there is a danger of developing some kind of 'complex' in the mind; they feel that some undesirable results, such as diseases, may appear.

- This is an ill-founded doubt. These complexes are due to other causes. They are morbid states due to excessive jealousy, hatred, anger, worry and depression.

In fact, the opposite is true. Even a little practice of self-restraint is an ideal 'pick-me-up.'

- It gives inner strength and peace of mind. It invigorates the mind and nerves. It helps one to save physical and mental energy. It helps to increase memory, will power and brain power.
- It bestows immense strength, vigour and vitality. It gives new life to the system, rebuilds the tissues and cells, energizes digestion, and gives one power to face difficulties in the daily battle of life.

A perfect Brahmachari can shake the whole world; can top the waves of the ocean, like Lord Jesus. Like Jnana Dev, he can blow up mountains and command the five elements. **There is nothing in the three worlds that cannot be achieved by such a person.**

A well disciplined life, study of scriptures, Satsang, Japa, meditation, Pranayama, Sattwic and moderate diet, daily self-analysis and introspection, practice of right conduct - all these will pave the way towards the attainment of perfection in Brahmacharya.

- Most people lead a life without any kind of discipline and religious ideals, with the result that they are always filled with fears, cares, worries and anxieties. Through diverse desires, they get entangled and create numerous problems for themselves.

In the case of young children, pure non-stimulating food, games and daily exercises are very important for keeping up Brahmacharya.

The Eight Breaks of Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

There are eight kinds of breaks, so to say, in the current of unbroken Brahmacharya practice. You should avoid them through great care, sincere exertion and vigilant attention. Then only will you be perfectly successful in the practice of Brahmacharya.

- **Darshan** – looking at a member of the opposite sex with carnal desire.
- **Sparsha** – desire to touch, embrace or be near a person of the opposite sex.
- **Keertan** – praising his or her qualities to your friends.
- **Keli** – amorous sport with the opposite sex.
- **Guhya Bhaashan** – talking privately to a member of the opposite sex.
- **Sankalpa** – lustful thought of the opposite sex.
- **Adhyavasaaya** – strong desire for carnal knowledge.
- **Kriya Nivritti** – sexual enjoyment.

Only one who is free from the entire above can be called a perfect Brahmachari. A real Brahmachari, who is seeking God earnestly, and who is engaged in spiritual practices, should avoid these breaks ruthlessly. A break in any one of these vows is a break in Brahmacharya. This point should be well borne in mind.

How to Accomplish Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

1. *Smarnam* - One should not think of the opposite sex.

- Thoughts of opposite sex should be overcome by engaging the mind in the repetition of the Name of the Lord.
- Memorize favourite verses from the Scriptures.

2. *Keertan* - One should not talk of sex life.

- Engage the mind in the repetition of the Name of the Lord **regularly** and this is called *Japa* (or the silent repetition of a Mantra - Incantation).
- *Japa* is *Tapasya* (penance, austerity, devotion) and it begins with Brahmacharya.
- Celibacy is very essential and only when one becomes detestable to sex life that is the beginning of spiritual life.

3. *Keli* - Don't play or dally with the opposite sex.

- Try to minimize your interactions with the opposite sex.

4. *Darshan* - Don't look lustfully at the opposite sex.

- Women are generally known as the fair sex, and especially in youth, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, women are very attractive to men. Therefore a woman's face is compared to a blooming lotus flower in autumn. **Just as a lotus is extremely beautiful in autumn, a woman at the threshold of youthful beauty is extremely attractive.** A woman's voice is also very attractive.
- *Sannyasa*, renunciation means giving up the company of women, but if a *sannyasi*, renunciant hears the voice of a woman and sees her beautiful face, he certainly becomes attracted and is sure to fall down. **Therefore, a person desiring to advance in spiritual consciousness must be especially careful not to pay conscious attention to a woman's face or her captivating voice.**
- **When a woman's bodily features are attractive, when her face is beautiful and when her voice is sweet, she is naturally a trap for a man.** The scriptures advise that when such a woman comes to serve a man, she should be considered to be like a dark well covered by grass. In the fields there are many such wells, and a man who does not know about them drops through the grass and falls down. **The same applies to renunciant women vis-à-vis the men and hence both men and women should not be attracted by bodily features.**

5. *Guhya Bhaashan* - Don't talk intimately with the opposite sex in a secluded place.

- Those who are not married should not associate with women by glancing, touching, conversing, joking or sporting. Neither should they ever associate with any living entity engaged in sexual activities.
- **One who is not married should rigidly avoid anything related to sex and of course should never see any living entity, whether bird, insect or human, engaging in the various phases of sexual intercourse.**
- When a man glances, touches, engages in conversation, sports, or jokes with a woman, an intimate, **sexually-charged atmosphere is immediately created**, and this should be avoided for those aspiring to practice celibacy.
- **Even a householder who becomes attached to such activities will also fall down into the darkness of ignorance.**

6. *Sankalpa* - The determination to engage in sexual intercourse.

- Don't contemplate to engage in sexual intercourse. Make sure you get proper counseling if you have fallen to this bad state of mind that of thinking, feeling, and willing sex.
- **If one doesn't get help to stop this contemplation at an early stage, then eventually it goes from thinking to feeling.** At this point, devoid of mind and sense control, the living entity loses all reasoning, and is unable to hear the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- Such a person usually ends up (at best, through counseling) getting married, or (at worse) becomes a debauchee - falling into illicit life. Sometimes he tries to satisfy this craving through artificial means.
- **Therefore, by making plans with determination, one should give up lusty desires for sense gratification.**
- Similarly, by giving up envy one should conquer anger, by discussing the disadvantages of accumulating wealth one should give up greed, and by discussing the truth one should give up fear.

7. *Adhyavasaaya* - Don't endeavor for sex life.

- There are two classes of men - those who are patient (*dhira*) and those who are impatient (*adhir*). **When one, in spite of provocation or in spite of the presence of a source of mental agitation, can remain steady in his position, he is called *dhira*.** One's body, words and intelligence should be controlled by one who is *dhira* and who actually knows the principles of religion.

8. *Kriya Nivritti* - Don't engage in sex life.

- Doing it has more trouble in store for you (health and otherwise) than you think. **Control the senses, mind, and activities by devotional service.** One executes real Brahmacharya when all these activities come to a halt.

In the materialistic concept of life, everyone is servant of the senses. Everyone acts by the dictation of the senses. Instead of becoming servant of the senses, **one has to become the master of the senses.**

So, how to become master of the senses? Senses are very strong. How one can become master?

The simple method is to engage the mind in the repetition of the Name of the Lord under the guidance of a fully realized teacher. **When one engages the senses in the service of the Supreme Lord, they are automatically controlled.**

These eight kinds of enjoyments are eight kinds of breaks in Brahmacharya. One must avoid these eight interruptions with great care, hard work and diligent self-introspection (always analyzing at all times to observe true motivations).

Only he who is truly free from these eight breaks can be technically called a Brahmachari.
